

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 8, 2013

Agenda Item: Proposed Harvest Prescriptions for Elk Archery Areas

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

In February 2008, the FWP Commission adopted new either-sex elk archery permit regulations in seven Missouri River Breaks hunting districts and 23 hunting districts outside the Breaks where either-sex rifle permits were already in place. Reasons included consistency, equity, management effectiveness and hunt quality. Public input was large and divided. During the 2010-2011 season setting process, this structure was maintained except in one hunting district (HD 441). While public comment was less divided than in 2008, public debate continued into the 2011 Legislature. FWP assembled two different working groups to review this topic.

Prompted by continued debate and final recommendations of the second working group, the FWP Commission again modified elk archery regulations in the districts for the 2012 and 2013 hunting seasons. This increased either-sex elk archery permit levels, removed HDs 420 and 455 from the districts requiring permits and “bundled” all permits in the 21 districts outside the Breaks. The increased permits were aimed at an increase hunter access to cow elk to achieve management objectives. Reflecting the second working group’s performance-based concept, the adoption included flexibility to modify regulations based on annual review of harvest relative to management objectives. This requires review and adoption of annual harvest prescriptions.

The FWP Commission adopted prescriptions for the 2012 hunting season. Prescribed antlerless harvests were achieved in six hunting districts, portions of districts, or hunting district groups. Harvests were below prescription in the remaining 15 areas. FWP anticipated that objectives would not be met early on, and that additional efforts and adjustments would be required to achieve harvest prescriptions. The original intent was to start small and follow with incrementally larger steps. The original intent was to reach objectives over a six-year timeframe. In addition, FWP and the Commission may consider and propose season adjustments this fall to improve harvest in hunting districts that fail to meet prescriptions.

Adjusted prescriptions for the 2013 hunting season are proposed. Enhanced efforts will be made to communicate any final harvest prescriptions prior to the hunting season. Post-season assessment of estimated harvest relative to these prescriptions would take place in May 2014 and would utilize winter population surveillance and harvest surveys.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Public comment on the proposed prescriptions ran through 5 p.m., Monday, July 22. FWP received six comments. The advocacy in the comments was varied.

Alternatives and Analysis

The Commission may adopt larger or smaller prescriptions with potentially reduced or increased timelines for meeting management objectives.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends adoption of these antlerless harvest prescriptions. The prescriptions represent staff evaluations of population productivity and include staff adjustments recognizing that some harvest levels consistent with a six-year timeline are likely too large to achieve initially.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission adopt the final 2013 elk harvest prescriptions as presented by FWP.